How to Love People Well – Part 1

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Loving others is the new command Jesus gave us. Jesus said, 'By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (John 13:35). He said all the law and the prophets could be summed up in the duel command to love God and love people. John writes, 'If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar' (1 John 4:20).

For followers of Jesus, love is important. Genuine, sincere love is a hallmark of the culture we need in our churches. The love that we have for one another is the evidence that we love God. 'If I have all faith,' writes Paul, 'but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.'

Corinthians on How to Love People

There are many ways that people understand love in the world today. But as followers of Jesus, we take our understanding of love from what the Bible says. In 1 Corinthians 13, one of the most famous passages on love, we find out exactly what love is.

Love is Patient

Patience means being able to tolerate delays and problems; to suffer without grumbling instead of becoming anxious or annoyed. It is allowing time when giving time is not convenient or when you might rather be somewhere else.

People are wonderful, and Jesus died for each one. They are also time-consuming. They can be inconvenient, hurtful, inconsistent and often ungrateful. It can take years for a soul to come to salvation, and, once saved, years more to move into all that God has for them. As saints called to love other saints, if we are looking for quick results, we will be disappointed. Love must be patient. We need to demonstrate that patience with each other.

Love is Kind

Jesus sent us out as sheep amongst wolves, not wolves amongst sheep. Kindness may be a lost art in our modern world, where outrage is the soup of the day. But as the saints of God, we are called to demonstrate kindness in everything we do. Kindness can be as simple as remembering someone's birthday. Making a meal for a sick family or helping someone move house. It could be giving someone a lift to the airport or offering to babysit for a single mom. Essentially, kindness is considering others above yourself or seeing that a person is more valuable than the things they can do for you (Philippians 2:3).

Jesus taught that there is no merit in only being kind to those you like or those who can pay you back. That level of kindness is even seen amongst sinners. The kindness we should display loves without being loved, gives without expecting a return, and is generous to those who can never repay (Luke 6:27-36).

> The kindness we should display loves without being loved

Kindness to others begins with being kind to yourself. Remember, Jesus said the way we love ourselves is the measure by which we love our neighbour (Luke 6:31; Matthew 22:39). If you're a workaholic and never take time off, you will be unlikely to afford that grace to others. If you never relax and have fun, it is unlikely anyone will ever be relaxed or have fun in your company.

Love Does Not Envy or Boast

Envy and boasting are both born from comparison. Envy compares me to others and sees me as worse. Boasting compares me to others and sees me as better. Paul wrote that 'by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to

think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned' (Romans 12:3).

> We need to learn to be sober in how we view ourselves.

We need to learn to be sober in how we view ourselves. If we are good at something, don't be shy to admit it. If we struggle with something, don't be shy to ask for help. Be authentic, sincere. It's been said that it takes a big man to make someone else feel small, but it takes a great man to make someone else feel big. Envy and boasting have no place in our lives. Rather, be content with who God made you to be, encourage one another and build each other up (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Love is Not Arrogant or Rude

Arrogance is like boasting, just subtler. While boasting says, 'I'm great!', arrogance implies the same without ever directly saying it. Arrogance assumes it knows more than others. Arrogance assumes everyone will be thrilled I have taken charge. In short, arrogance, drunk on its own magnificence, considers itself more highly than it ought. Don't be like that!

Rudeness takes many forms. The most obvious is rude speech. Vulgar or abusive language that does nothing to build others up. But rudeness can also be ignoring someone. It can be using a nickname for someone that they don't like. Rude can be arriving late, constantly looking at your phone in company, or looking vacantly over someone's shoulder when their conversation begins to bore you.

Love is not that. Because love knows that every person is someone Jesus died for, we should do our utmost to outdo one another in showing honour (Romans 12:10). Our speech must always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that we can know how to speak to each person (Colossians 4:6).

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Love People Sincerely

Paul tells us, 'Love must be sincere' (Romans 12:9). Just as it is not enough to say we love God if we don't love our brother, it is also not enough to say we love our brother if we do nothing to demonstrate that love. Love is a verb. We don't do love because we feel love; we feel love because we do love. The Psalmist said, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know

my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!' (Psalm 139:23,24). As you read through 1 Corinthians 13, allow God to examine your heart. Stir yourself towards love. Love one another.